

Astrocode™ "Here's What They Say"...

Video Action Consumer Scrapbook Spring '82

Entering the home video game market, Astrovision, Inc. (Astrocade) is the newest contender against the currently preeminent Atari, which now garners around 80% of the pie. With its *Astro Professional Arcade* (formerly called the *Bally Professional Arcade*) (Astrocade)—which retails for \$289—and a line of 18 cartridges—which range in price from \$19 to \$30—Astrovision (Astrocade) hopes to cut out a good slice of the trade for itself. While only 7% of color televisions have a game attachment, the home video game market is expected to expand to \$1 billion in sales this coming year. There is more than enough room for Astrovision (Astrocade) particularly considering its general excellence in graphics and joystick design.

GALACTIC INVASION and FOOTBALL, video game cartridges from Astrovision, Inc., (Astrocade). Retail price: \$29.95 each.

Watch out, Atari, Intellivision, and Odyssey—Astrovision (Astrocade) has arrived and it may just take over. Why? Because it has better visuals, it has a better joystick, and it also has better joystick, and it also has better options (by options, I mean the "intensity levels").

Astrovision (Astrocade) has a unique design: a built-in calculator, three built-in games, and a cartridge storage unit with a dust cover. The calculator, besides being able to be used as such (which really helps at homework time) allows you to program each game for number of players, number of plays, and "intensity"—which is how hard you want the game to be, from one-to-nine with nine the most difficult.

I am familiar with the other three home video games on the market. All of them have one flaw or another. The Odyssey game has a good joystick but it has uninteresting graphics. Intellivision has good graphics but a controller which is confusing and which takes your mind away from the action on the screen. Atari, the leader in the field, has interesting games but the joystick makes it hard to employ precision moves and it hurts your hand after a short while. Astrovision (Astrocade) suffers from none of these. Its graphics are generally exciting, its joystick is light and easy to use.

The unit, as I mentioned before, has three game functions built in the memory (in other words, cartridges are not required for these): *Gunfight*, *Cheekmate*, and *Scribbling*.

Gunfight is a game most people are familiar with. All the other video game units have a *Gunfight* game cartridge and it has appeared in several versions in arcade machines. Two cowboys try to shoot each other dead; there are obstacles like trees and cacti and wagon trains. If you haven't seen this game then you haven't been playing video games for very long. It's fun for a little while, but there are better games.

Cheekmate is a game of entrapment; you have to form a trail which will trap your opponent (the computer) and eventually make your opponent crash into your trail. I usually beat the computer at this one, which is surprising, considering that it is a computer and you'd think it would be smarter.

Scribbling is a video version of the Etch-A-Sketch game: you use the television screen and the joystick to draw designs. You can also program the unit to draw its own designs. You can also control the various colors in the designs.

Before describing a couple of the game cartridges I'd like to talk a little more about the Astrovision (Astrocade) joystick. Like I said, it is the easiest of all the joysticks for home television games. It is shaped like a gun handle; it has a trigger, on top it has a stick which you can move in all the major directions of the compass, and on top of the stick it has a knob which you use for "fine tuning" certain moves in various games. It gives the Astrovision (Astrocade) games an element of precision

missing in the other game units from other manufacturers.

Galactic Invasion is like the arcade game *Galaxian*. In setting up *Galactic Invasion* for play you can use either the calculator in the board or you can use the trigger on the joystick to program the number of players, number of plays, and level of difficulty. Of all the home games I have ever played, *Galactic Invasion* is most like playing a coin-operated arcade game. As most of you know, the arcade games are more sophisticated than home games, but *Galactic Invasion* is really like playing in an arcade—and without costing 25¢ a play! In *Galactic Invasion*, alien ships are lined up in a *Space Invaders*-type of pattern, but some of the ships—usually three—break out of the pack and drive down at you like kamikaze pilots. In some of the higher difficulty levels these ships also shoot at you. The enemy ships have almost incredible maneuvering ability to dodge your fire. The audio part is realistic when explosions occur. The playing field is multi-colored and fun to watch. I've played the game for hours, both by myself and against opponents and rarely do I get tired of playing (by the way, the Astrovision (Astrocade) unit will accept up to four players, though you do have to purchase an extra two joysticks to have four players at a time).

Football is also fun on Astrovision (Astrocade); as far as I am concerned it is better than the versions on the other home game units. I mean when you complete a pass and made a touchdown you feel like you really are on a real field—music plays (DADA-DADA-DADA) and a crowd roars. With eight offensive options (end run, screen pass, long bomb, short middle pass, long middle pass, crossing pass, sideline pass, and the "razzle-dazzle") the game is challenging, exciting, and versatile. While the game is fairly easy to master, the outcome really depends on who you are playing. It seems that people who are good at sports—that is, people with good reflexes—are also good at this game so that even though I have lost to guys who are bigger and better sportsmen than I am I have not had to worry about getting bruised.

Finally, all I have to add is that I think that Astrovision (Astrocade) is the best unit on the market and I strongly suggest that you check it out. Maybe they'll give you a trade-in on your Atari.

—Jason Stichauf

Consumer Electronics Monthly March 1982

Astrovision's [Astrocade's] new multi-million dollar advertising campaign takes into account what George feels in a broad target market. The campaign includes both television and print ads and offers a co-op program for dealers. The budget for 1982 represents an increase of more than 50 per cent over the 1981 figure.

Leisure Time Electronic Reports May 3, 1982

[Re: Astrovision's being renamed Astrocade]
"Our new name is a lot easier to say, more memorable, and avoids confusion with other companies," says Ray George.

Hobby Merchandiser Monthly January 1982

"...the Bally Arcade [Astrocade] has now begun offering a variety of games that elevates it into the class of the other three."

Video Magazine May 1982

"Bally Pin, [Astrocade Pinball]...is absolutely the best video game pinball simulation ever offered for any programmable home system...Orchestrating ball movement is perhaps the hardest part of pinball to translate to the video screen." Bob Ogdon, the designer has infused "this creation with a feeling of realism that is generally absent in video pin contests."

"These cartridges, [Galactic Invasion and Astrocade Pinball] can stand up against any of the titles produced for rival video games. They serve notice to the electronic-arcade world that we will shortly have to enlarge the present "big three"—Atari VCS, Odyssey, and Intellivision—to a "big four" that includes the rechristened Astro Professional Arcade, [Astrocade]."

Play Things March 1982

"Seven video game cartridges, and two games that combine education and fun—Coloring Book with Light Pen and Music Maker—highlight Astrovision's [Astrocade's] line-up for the year..."

Electronic Games May 1982

Letters to the Editor:

"...In my opinion, the Arcade [Astrocade] is equal to or better than any other systems you covered..."

Home Furnishings Daily May 24, 1982

Astrocade, Inc., formerly Astrovision, Inc., has announced a licensing agreement with Conan Licensing Co. to produce a home video game cartridge based on the popular character.

The announcement coincides with the opening this week of the film, "Conan the Barbarian" at 1400 theaters nationwide.

The Conan cartridge will be the first, says Astrocade, to spin off from a movie or comic book series. The new cartridge will premier at the summer CES and will ship to Astrocade dealers this summer.

Electronic Games May 1982

Astrocade showed several top-line games—"Space Fortress is a space shoot-out that's long on action, color & flash. The [Incredible] Wizard, from Wizard of War designer Bob Ogdon, is a virtual duplicate of the coin-op version and *Quest for the Orb* [Conan] promises to be one of the most unique video games of all time."

Merchandising February 1982

"Enthusiastic retailers crowded video game suppliers' booths at the Consumer Electronics Show. Some reasons why...Astrovision [Astrocade] introduced seven new cartridges for the Astro, (formerly Bally) Professional Arcade (Astrocade). These include...The [Incredible] Wizard, Solar Conqueror, Cosmic Raiders, Space Fortress, Pirate's Chase and Quest for the Orb, [Conan]."